
“The God-Man”**Luke 1:26-38****Pastor Peter Yi****November 29, 2020****(Luke 1:26-38)**

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

When we compare the announcement of the birth of Jesus given to Mary in this passage with the announcement that was given to Zechariah regarding the birth of John the Baptist, there are many similarities.

- Both involve the coming of an angel to make the announcement.
- In both cases, the person receiving the announcement is fearful.
- The angel reassures both Zechariah and Mary not to be afraid.
- The purpose or significance of the child is laid out.
- Both Zechariah and Mary express some kind of doubt.
- Both accounts mention the role of the Holy Spirit.
- In both cases some kind of sign or instruction is given by the angel.
- And finally, in both narratives, a remark about the significance of the angel’s words is present.

At least six months have passed since the angel Gabriel first appeared to Zechariah. His wife Elizabeth is now six months pregnant. This is when the angel Gabriel appears again. This time it’s not in Jerusalem at the temple, but in a small town called Nazareth, in the region of Galilee. Nazareth was about an hour’s walk from the district capital of Galilee. It was the hometown of Mary and Joseph. This was the town where Jesus grew up, though he was born in Bethlehem. Nazareth had a synagogue, where young Jesus regularly attended. For some reason though Nazareth had a bad reputation.

If you remember in John's gospel, when Philip told Nathanael that he had found Jesus of Nazareth, Nathaniel replied, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"

In this small town of Nazareth was a virgin who was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of David. The word for virgin means a young unmarried woman, a maiden. Implied in the word is the idea of purity. Though technically the word means young unmarried woman, virginity is implied in the fact that she is first of all young and second, unmarried. In addition to that Matthew's narrative tells us that Joseph did not consummate the marriage with Mary, until after the child was born. To add even more strength to the argument, a few verses down Mary asks the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The phrase is literally, "since I have not known a man." As many of you know, the word 'to know' depending on the context means to know intimately or to know sexually, a man. The angel answers saying, "The Holy Spirit will come on you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." The means by which she will become pregnant is by the Holy Spirit. In Matthew's narrative, Joseph found out Mary was pregnant and was going to quietly divorce her, but in a dream, an angel appeared and told him, "What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

We don't know exactly from which tribe Mary came. It's possible she was of the tribe of Levi since she was a relative of Elizabeth. Some assert that she was from the line of David. It could be both from each of her parents. But what we do know for certain is that her fiancé, Joseph was a descendant of David. And even though Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, this is how Jesus received his kingly lineage. In those times, similar to ours, marriage required a two-step process. One was a betrothal, or an engagement. This engagement was done through the parents and it became a legally binding marriage, which would have been celebrated and consummated around a year later. It wasn't unlike engagements today that can be broken with no legal consequence. One of the ways we can know how binding this engagement was, is by looking at Joseph's response to Mary's pregnancy in Matthew's gospel. Though they were not yet married, technically, he was going to divorce her. So, as long as they are married, any child born to Mary is of the lineage of the father. That is why Jesus is considered a son of David.

The angel addresses Mary saying, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary is told she is the recipient of God's grace and kindness and blessing. It's not that there is favor in and of herself or that she is exuding in grace. No, here God is the actor. It's his grace that is bestowed on Mary. And God will be with this young virgin for what is about to happen next.

Mary was greatly troubled or really perplexed at the words of the angel. She was pondering, thinking, "What sort of greeting is this?" meaning, what's going on? What's going to happen next?

The angel replies saying to her, "Do not be afraid Mary; you have found favor with God. Here again, we might think that Mary has merited favor with God, that Mary, as a young lady, has lived such a blameless life, that God in turn has shown her favor. Here's how Calvin describes it. "A person is said to find favor, not when he has sought it, but when it has been feely offered to him. Instances of this are so well known, that it would be of no use to quote them."

Next comes the big announcement.

³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

We can see that the angel states what will certainly happen to Mary. You will conceive. You will carry this child to term. You will give birth to this child. This child will be a son. There is no ambiguity. There's no uncertainty. It is as good as done. God is on the move. He will carry out his eternal plan, through a young lady named Mary.

From the angel's announcement, what do we learn about this child?

- **The child will be male, he will be a son.** This is important, not because women were unimportant, but in patriarchal times, God's way of carrying out his promises was through men. Now, women shouldn't be offended at this. I mean, even here in this narrative, the focus is on a woman, named Mary. But in the biblical record, the plans of God were essentially carried out through the line of men. God created Adam. God chose Noah. God chose Abraham. God chose Moses. God chose David, and so on and so. Women of course had a huge role. Think of the role of Eve as the mother of humanity. The role of Sarah. The role of Moses' mother. The role of Ruth as the great grandmother of David and here, the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. So, without taking anything away from women and the significant role they play in God's plan of redemption, it goes without saying that God's purposes are fulfilled through the line of men. Thus, Jesus was a son, a male child.
- **And his name is to be called Jesus.** Just as Zechariah and Elizabeth were told what to name their child, Mary too is told to name her son, Jesus. The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means, "Yahweh is salvation." In Matthew's narrative the angel says to Joseph, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Already in just his name, we get a sense of who he will be and what he will do.
- --In his name we begin to understand what our greatest need is. It's to be saved. It's to receive God's salvation. In his name we learn what our greatest problem is. It is sin, which results in alienation from God. Because of our sins, our rebellion against God and his laws, we become guilty and deserving of God's just punishment.
--We learn in his name that only God can save us. We can't save ourselves. We can't improve ourselves. We can't get ourselves out of the mess we've created. This is only something Yahweh could do.
--In his name we learn how much God cares for us. He doesn't leave us to wallow in the mire of our lostness and sinfulness. He has a plan. He has made a way for us to be brought back to him. We will soon learn how much it cost God to save us. We will learn the great extent to which God will go in order to save us. That's why this child will be called Jesus, because in him and through him, Yahweh will save sinners like you and me.
- **He will be great** (megas). John the Baptist is to be great before the Lord. Jesus, without any other description is just called great. But great in what sense? Wayne Gretzky was known as The Great One for his stunning accomplishments on the ice.

Other athletes like Tom Brady, Michael Jordan are called the Greatest of All Time for all their championships. But how can these flawed mortals be compared to Jesus, who is just great. Jesus' greatness is beyond human categories. One commentator says that when the word 'great' is used on its own in the Old Testament, it always refers to God. Only God is great. That what Jesus will be. Let's look further into his greatness.

- **He will be called the Son of the Most High.** The Most High of course refers to God the Father, so to call him Son of the Most High is the same as calling him Son of God. But what does Son of God actually mean? Is Jesus the Son of God because he was born? Is that the main reason why he's called by this title, or is there more to it? As you might have guessed, there is more to it. In the Old Testament if someone was called a son of God or sons of the Most High, it meant that the person had a very special and intimate relationship with God. So surely that applies to Jesus. There is no one who has a more intimate or enduring relationship with God the Father than Jesus. Eternally, they existed in perfect communion, fellowship and harmony. No one does God love more than his son, Jesus. God said at Jesus' baptism. "This is my son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased." In that sense he is the Son.

In addition to that, Son of God in the Old Testament also refers to King David and the special promise that he received from God. In 2 Samuel 7, where we find the words of the Davidic Covenant, God says regarding David's descendant, "I will be his father, and he will be my **son**." So, it is a phrase used of royalty, of one who is of the kingly line. And that's what it must refer to here as well. This is exactly what we see in the next description.

- The next thing the angel says about Jesus is, "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

David was the epitome of Israel's kingly dynasty. Of all the kings, he was the great king. He was the second king of Israel after Saul. He was divinely appointed by Samuel. He was the youngest of many brothers. He was the great conqueror. His acclaim began when he killed Goliath, the symbol of power of their enemies, the Philistines. Under David, all the enemies of Israel were defeated. He brought political peace and rest to the people of God. David was the one who established the city of Jerusalem, Zion, as the political and religious center of the Israelite world. There he built his palace, the center of government. And there his son, Solomon would build God's temple, the center of Israelites worship. David was also called a man after God's own heart. We see that in his life—though imperfect and very flawed, he loved the Lord God and lived his life in devotion to Him. He was the great lyricist, poet and songwriter of the people of God, which are recorded in the Psalms. But perhaps the most notable thing about David, is not what he did for God, but what God did for him.

Let's go back to 2 Samuel 7 one more time. At the beginning of that chapter, David says to Nathan the prophet that here he is, living in a beautiful palace, and God doesn't have a temple. The ark of God is still dwelling in a tent. David wants to build a house for God, a temple. Nathan commends him to do it. But that very night, God spoke to Nathan a message to give to David. In that message, God reviews everything he did for David throughout his life. God's the one who took him from being a shepherd boy and appointed him to be a king.

God's the one who delivered him from his enemies and God's the one who will continue to care for and provide for his people. Everything that has happened to David is because of God. Then Nathan says to David the incredible words,

“ ‘The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you:

¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom.

¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands.

¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’ ”

Interwoven in this amazing promise are both immediate and distant promises, both earthly and eternal promises, both human and divine promises. Though it seems like some of the details of this promise could only refer to a human being, like David's son, Solomon, but there are aspects that surely couldn't refer to Solomon. However, many aspects of this promise to David, could only refer to someone that is more than just a human king. Consider the phrases, “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever,” I will never take my love away from him, Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

It's only when we see and understand this amazing promise given to David that we begin to understand the significance of what the angel told Mary regarding the son she was to have. The Lord God will give to Mary's son, the throne, the eternal throne of his ancestor, the great King David, to whom God promised, that from his descendants would come one who would reign as king eternally over Jacob's descendants, that is the nation of Israel, that is the people of God, that is, the Church of Christ, the souls for which Christ came to save. I don't know if Mary would have taken in the weight and gravity of the child she was about to have.

Let's recap. The angel Gabriel tells Mary, You will give birth to a son. His name will be Jesus, He will be great. He will be called the Son of the Most High. God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; and his kingdom will never end.

Let's keep going. What happens next? Mary replies to the angel saying, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel explains that the Holy Spirit will come on you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” The one that'll be born will be holy. He will be without sin. He will not inherit Mary's sin nature, like every other child of Adam does. This child instead, will receive the unspoiled, untainted, perfect nature of the divine. He will be holy. To this Mary humbly responds, “I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.”

She fully submits and entrusts herself to the word of God. We must admire Mary for this. She was young, probably just a teenager. She was submissive. She was full of faith. She was obedient.

Application. Three things:

First, we see that God is the actor in every aspect of this narrative. God chooses Mary. He, through the angel, approaches Mary. God bestows his favor and blessing and kindness upon Mary. God is the one who declares to her that “the Lord is with you.” God is the one who makes her conceive a child. All of it is God. What does this tell us? It informs us that salvation is not a self-improvement project. It’s not about trying harder or becoming better. Christian salvation is not about self-help. It’s about God, in his grace, entering the world of lost and sinful humans, to save them from their sins.

Second, like Mary, regardless of how old or young we are, whether we are male or female, we should emulate her humility, her submissiveness, her trust, that is, her faith in God, and finally her obedience. The same words that Mary spoke should fall from the lips of every Christian. “I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.” Can anyone consider themselves a Christian and not say, “I am the Lord’s servant?” Can anyone who is a disciple of Jesus not say, “May your word to me be fulfilled?” God’s word to each one of us are the commands he has shown us in the Bible. To each of these commands, we must reply, “May your word to me be fulfilled.”

Finally, from this angelic announcement we see that the child to be born is both human and divine.

--That he will be born of a woman means that he will be human. That he will be born of a virgin, by the Holy Spirit, means that he will be divine.

--That he is a descendant of David means that he will be a human king. That his kingdom will be eternal and forever means that he is a divine king.

This child, Jesus, our Saviour, is both man and God, human and divine. He is the God-man. Why must the Saviour of the world, our Saviour, be both of these things, why must he possess both natures? I remember reading something years and years ago that the ancient church father Augustine wrote, as the answer to this question. This is my paraphrase. The Saviour had to be divine, had to be God, because it was God, because of our sin was offended. It was God whose wrath needed to be appeased and who, but a God could appease a God? How could a mere human satisfy the requirements of God?

However, the Saviour also had to be human, a man, because it was man who sins needed to be atoned. It was man who was alienated from God. It was man who was corrupted by the fall. Only in Jesus do we find the perfect mediator. He alone is the God-man. The Apostle Peter boldly proclaimed, regarding Jesus,

(Acts 4:12) Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

And the Apostle Paul declared,

(1Timothy 2:5) For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind,
the man Christ Jesus,

Have you received Jesus, the God-man, as your Saviour? If you haven't then you are still in your sins, and you are without hope in this world. Call out to God today. Receive his free gift of his Son, who came for you, to save you from your sins. If you go to him, he will receive you.

Let's pray.